

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 OMB-01 AID-20 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 EA-11

RSR-01 /141 W

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R 161230 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4090

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 0544

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MT

SUBJECT: MINTOFF FACES DOWN DRYDOCKS WORKERS

REF: VALLETTA 0539

1. SUMMARY: MINTOFF DELIVERED TWO HOUR HARANGUE TO MALTA DRYDOCKS WORKERS AFTERNOON MAR 15. AFTER BLAMING THE POOR FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE YARD ON FAILURE OF GENERAL WORKERS UNION LEADERS TO INSTITUTE STRICTER MEASURES, AND LAZINESS OF THE WORKERS, MINTOFF GAVE THE WORKERS THREE CHOICES: HIS RESIGNATION; CLOSURE OF THE YARD; ACCEPTANCE BY THE WORKERS OF STIFFER WORKING CONDITIONS AND WAGE AND SALARY REDUCTIONS. THE LATTER CARRIED, BUT MOST WORKERS PRESENT ABSTAINED IN ANGER.

2. WHILE MINTOFF GOT MIXED REACTION ON FIRST TWO ALTERNATIVES (MEETING WAS LOADED WITH LOYAL SUPPORTERS NOT NECESSARILY DRYDOCK WORKERS), THERE WAS GENERAL SUPPORT FOR KEEPING THE YARD OPEN. MINTOFF THEN ANNOUNCED THAT SHIFT WORK AND OVERTIME WOULD BE ABOLISHED; WORKING HOURS WOULD BE FROM 7:00 A. M. TO 5:00 P. M.,
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MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, AND 7:00 A. M. TO NOON ON SATURDAY; AND THAT WORKERS MUST, WHEN NECESSARY, DO OTHER THAN THEIR SPECIFIC DUTIES. EXECUTIVE AND CLERICAL SALARIES WOULD BE REDUCED FROM 10 TO 20 PER CENT, AND IN NEXT SIX MONTHS INDUSTRIALS WOULD BE GUARANTEED 95 PER CENT OF EARNINGS DURING PAST SIX MONTHS. MAJORITY OF WORKERS EITHER BOOED OR REMAINED SILENT.

3. AFTER RECEIVING NEGATIVE RESPONSE ON NEW WORK RULES AND WORK CUTS, MINTOFF ASKED AGAIN IF THEY WANTED HIM TO RESIGN, NOT TO BE REPLACED BY A NATIONALIST, BUT BY ANOTHER LABORITE. HE CALLED ON THOSE WHO WANTED HIM TO RESIGN TO RAISE THEIR HANDS AND GOT LITTLE REACTION. HE THEN CALLED THOSE WHO WANTED HIM TO STAY. REACTION WAS EQUALLY LACKING, EXCEPT FOR SUPPORTERS GATHERED CLOSE TO HIM. A NUMBER OF WORKERS ASKED THAT THE VOTE BE TAKEN IN THE YARD INSTEAD OF PUBLIC SQUARE.

4. MINTOFF ACCUSED GWU LEADERS OF FAILING TO INSTITUTE GOM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRICTER WORK RULES AND EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE RESULTS OF GWU PARTICIPATION IN YARD MANAGEMENT. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY A VISIT TO A FACTORY IN CHINA WHICH WAS MANAGED BY EMPLOYEES, WHO MET EVERY WEEK TO DISCUSS WORK PROBLEMS.

5. HE STATED THAT ACTIONS TAKEN BY GOM HAD REDUCED THE EXPECTED FY 1972/73 DEFICIT OF 2.5 MILLION POUNDS TO 2 MILLION POUNDS. FOR 1973/74 HE WOULD ONLY BUDGET FOR A LOSS OF FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND POUNDS, AND DEMANDED THAT LOSS IN NEXT SIX MONTHS BE NO MORE THAN HALF THAT AMOUNT. HE SAID HE REFUSED TO SUBSIDIZE THE LAZY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SICK AND POOR.

5. USIS LOCAL ATTENDED MEETING AND REPORTS THAT MINTOFF SUPPORTERS AND DRYDOCKS WORKERS WERE SUFFICIENTLY SEPARATED TO NOTE THAT WORKERS WERE ANGRY AND SULLEN THROUGHOUT, ALTHOUGH THEY APPARENTLY WERE TOO COWED OPENLY TO CALL FOR MINTOFF'S RESIGNATION. HE ALSO REPORTED THAT MINTOFF WAS FORCEFUL AND ANGRY DURING WHOLE AFFAIR, INSULTING THE WORKERS (COMPARING THEM UNFAVORABLY WITH FRENCH AND GERMAN WORKERS) ALMOST AS MUCH AS THE GWU. (GWU LEADERS WERE ABSENT, FULL CABINET WAS PRESENT.) LOCAL TOOK STATEMENT AT END OF MEETING, THAT GOM NOW IN CONTROL, TO MEAN THAT WORKERS THROUGH THEIR UNION WOULD NO LONGER HAVE DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT.

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7. THE GWU METAL WORKERS AND CLERICAL SECTIONS HELD MEET-

ING EVENING MAR 15. ACCORDING GWU PRESS PURPOSE WAS TO EXPLAIN NEW WORK RULES AND WAGE REDUCTIONS. REPORTEDLY, NO DECISIONS WERE MADE ON WHAT FUTURE ACTION GWU MIGHT TAKE.

8. MAR 16 GWU PRESS FULLY REPORTED MINTOFF' S SPEECH BUT CARRIED NO EDITORIAL COMMENT. IL- HAJJA (IND- CHURCH) SAID THAT MINTOFF WAS RIGHT AND THAT SUCH DRASTIC ACTION NECESSARY TO GET THE YARD ON ITS FEET. IN- NAZZJON (NP), OF COURSE, HAD A HEYDAY, ATTEMPTING TO INCREASE MINTOFF' S DIFFICULTIES BY SAYING WORKERS HAD EXPECTED WAGE INCREASES PROMISED UNDER THE NATIONALISTS, AND WERE SHOCKED BY HIS NEW WORK PROGRAM.

9. COMMENT: MINTOFF' S DECISION TO HOLD MEETING WAS CLEAR EVIDENCE OF THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH HE VIEWS THE DRYDOCKS PROBLEM, AND OF HIS CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY TO HANDLE THE WORKERS. HIS WILLINGNESS TO CREATE A SITUATION POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS TO HIM, ALTHOUGH HELD IN CONSPICUA, HIS MAJOR STRONGHOLD, WAS COURAGEOUS INDEED, BUT WE DOUBT THAT HE EXPECTED AS MUCH DISCONTENT AS WAS SHOWN AT MEETING. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ACTIONS WILL IN LARGE PART DEPEND UPON WHETHER GWU DECIDES TO FIGHT MINTOFF, AND IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER ITS LEADERSHIP IS STRONG ENOUGH (GIVEN ABSENCE OF ATTARD KINGSWELL AND LORRY SANT) TO DO SO. GETZ

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: worrelsw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973VALLET00544
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: VALLETTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730331/aaaahxyo.tel
Line Count: 142
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 VALLETTA 0539
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: worrelsw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25-Jul-2001 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <23-Aug-2001 by worrelsw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 971211
Subject: MINTOFF FACES DOWN DRYDOCKS WORKERS
TAGS: PINT, MT
To: EUR
SECSTATE WASHDC INFO BONN
LONDON
ROME
USNATO
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

